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Hispania, Volume 100, Number 2, June 2017, pp. 202-212 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/hpn.2017.0035*

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Rescuing Red Riding Hood: Carmen Martín Gaite's *Caperucita en Manhattan*

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Abstract: Carmen Martín Gaite's *Caperucita en Manhattan* is a Young Adult novel ahead of its time. If this category had existed in Spain when it was published, it is likely that it would have earned the critical recognition it deserves. The novel's exciting plot, captivating prose, wise cultural commentary, factual content, sense of humor, and message of female empowerment are strong enough to engage readers of all ages. In addition to its literary value, this novel has a key place in the author's own biography, serving as a bridge back to life and literature after her daughter's untimely death. A fresh look at *Caperucita en Manhattan* will reveal the reasons why it is beloved around the world and why it deserves a place in the Martín Gaite novel canon.

Keywords: *Caperucita en Manhattan,* Carmen Martín Gaite, fairy tales/cuentos de hadas, fantastic literature/literatura fantástica, literary canon/canon literario, Spanish women writers/escritoras españolas, Young Adult literature/literatura juvenil

Carmen Martín Gaite (1925–2000) is the most-studied woman writer of contemporary Spain, as documented by the *MLA Bibliography*. In the years since her passing, Martín Gaite has received even more attention than she enjoyed while she was alive. Her legacy has been the subject of conferences, books, journals, and articles.[1] New critical appraisals have begun to break down rigid genre categories into which her fiction has been classified—categories that the author herself tried to surmount. This essay proposes a new look at an exceptional novel that, I believe, has been widely overlooked because of misclassification. *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990) is treasured around the world. It has been translated into Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Swedish, and even Esperanto. The novel's charms are compelling and transcendent. In beautifully flowing prose, Martín Gaite spins a modern-day adventure of Little Red Riding Hood in New York City, engaging readers across age groups in an exciting journey while sharing the hallmarks of her literature: astute character development, wry social criticism, cultural information, and humor that ranges from subtle to hilarious.

In this essay I will demonstrate that the novel has been unjustly ignored because its genre did not yet exist in Spain when it appeared and that it is crucial to Martín Gaite's literary production. Its significance is based on two pillars: one literary and the other autobiographical. *Caperucita en Manhattan* is a novel of considerable attainment. It is also the novel that saved Martín Gaite from ending her literary career prematurely, before writing *Nubosidad variable* (1992) or her other novels of the 1990s. My evidence for genre misclassification will draw on the still under-theorized field of young adult fiction, criticism of which has been dispersed among the realms of education, English, and library science. Evidence for the autobiographical significance of the novel will come from the author's notebooks, speeches, and letters, as well as from my own experience as her friend and colleague for twenty-five years.

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A Modern Red Riding Hood in New York City

Caperucita en Manhattan is a complicated re-imagining of the folk tale that was first brought into print by French author Charles Perrault in 1697. The book's structure is like a play in two acts: the first part is "Sueños de libertad" and the second "La aventura." These parts comprise thirteen chapters, spanning 200 pages. Each chapter features a descriptive title reminiscent of a nineteenth-century novel, drawing the reader into the tale. Part One of the novel establishes the heroine's backstory. Ten-year-old Sara Allen lives in Brooklyn in the 1980s. She longs for the excitement of Manhattan: "Los niños que viven en Brooklyn no todos se duermen por la noche. Piensan en Manhattan como en lo más cercano y al mismo tiempo lo más exótico del mundo, y su barrio les parece un pueblo perdido donde nunca pasa nada" (15). Sara's parents have mundane occupations and outlooks, but her mother's true passion is baking, and strawberry tarts are her specialty. The young girl identifies with her maternal grandmother, a former chanteuse named Rebecca Little whose stage name is Gloria Star. She lives in the Manhattan neighborhood of Morningside, across from Morningside Park. This grandmother is both beautiful and brave: she is unafraid to go into the park, despite the threat of the "Bronx vampire" (evocative of the "Son of Sam" killer in the 1970s) who has murdered five women and is still at large.

From the young girl's perspective, "todo tenía que ver con la libertad" (23). Sara reads, writes, draws, prays to the Statue of Liberty, and invents her own lexicon of words she calls "farfanías," the most notable being "miranfú" which means "'va a pasar algo diferente' o 'me voy a llevar una sorpresa'" (35). Sara learns to keep her dreams to herself, waiting for something to happen while studying a map of Manhattan. Although Sara accompanies her mother on visits to her grandmother by subway each weekend, she longs to go to Manhattan by herself and to stay there. Part Two of the novel delivers the adventure that its title promises. It introduces its most stunning new character, Miss Lunatic. She is a luminous old woman who roams the streets of New York pushing an antique baby carriage. Miss Lunatic resembles a homeless woman—or the old crone Celestina, whose wisdom is cited in the opening epigraph. In fact Miss Lunatic is the spirit of Liberty: Madame Bartholdi, the 185-year-old mother and muse of the sculptor who created the statue in New York Harbor. She lives to help others and has no interest in material rewards. For her, freedom and wealth are opposing concepts: "Para mí la única fortuna, ya le digo, es la de saber vivir, la de ser libre" (94).

Miss Lunatic meets Edgar Woolf, a lonely pastry magnate who lives in a luxurious building shaped like a gigantic tart, overlooking Central Park. Mr. Woolf is frantically seeking a new recipe for strawberry tarts, because the one he has is so bad that it is ruining his brand, *The Sweet Woolf*. The next day, Miss Lunatic comes across Sara crying in the subway, wanting to walk through Central Park on her way to her grandmother's house but overcome with fear. Sara is wearing a hooded red raincoat and carrying a strawberry tart in a basket. The older woman befriends the young girl—more accurately, they befriend each other—and adventures ensue. Miss Lunatic imparts her secrets and empowers Sara to overcome her fear of freedom. Sara meets Mr. Woolf in Central Park, shares some of the strawberry tart, and arranges for him to get the recipe from her grandmother—the same Gloria Star on whom he had a crush as a young man. The final chapter is entitled "*Happy end* pero sin cerrar." Sara leaves Edgar Woolf dancing with her grandmother and drinking champagne, as she herself embarks on a magical trip to the Statue of Liberty.

A Young Adult Novel Ahead of Its Time

Although it has been embraced by readers, *Caperucita* has been sidelined by critics. The reception history of *Caperucita en Manhattan* has been one of popular triumph without the critical notice necessary for entry into a literary canon (Brown, "Constructing"). The *MLA Bibliography* reports only eighteen scholarly essays on this novel to date, roughly one-tenth the

number of studies of her most famous novel *El cuarto de atrás* (1978). Nearly half of these studies focus on the novel's revision of Perrault's fairy tale (notably those of Beckett, Jurado Morales, and Soliño). Differences between the hypotext and Martín Gaite's novel involve new perspectives on characters and themes; Beckett classifies the novel as an "expansion" text (299–331). New York City is the only other topic that has elicited more than a single critical response (Jurado Morales; Ribeiro de Menezes; Roger; Sarmatti).

Not only has critical attention been meager, it has also been misdirected—"faked out" by an initial classification, "literatura infantil," that has no relevance to this novel. Spain, unlike the United States, had no well-developed "Young Adult" category for fiction until the twenty-first century, when "literatura juvenil" came into its own as a category separate from "literatura infantil." Prizes, booklists, and scholarship underscore this lack. The Premio Nacional de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil, introduced in 1978, has never distinguished between the two categories, awarding prizes indiscriminately to books for either audience. Publishers' prizes, like their booklists known by the acronym "LIJ," also maintained this forced pairing throughout the twentieth century, with very few exceptions (the best-known being the pioneering Premio Edebé de Literatura Juvenil, launched in 1993 with Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *El Príncipe de la Niebla*). Although the Premio Alandar de Narrativa Juvenil was inaugurated by the publisher Edelvives in 2001, similar prizes did not proliferate until the past decade. These included prizes that detached Young Adult fiction from children's books, such as the Premio Juvenil Everest established in 2009 (thirteen years after the prize was created for "literatura infantil y juvenil"), as well as new prizes such as the Premio "La Caixa"/Plataforma Novela Juvenil, inaugurated in 2010. With regard to scholarship, the Ministry of Culture database of Spanish publications since 1972 does not contain a single study of literature for young people prior to 1991, and numbers do not begin to build until the years 1995–2000 (*Base de datos*). This database, which gets its information from publishers when they apply for an ISBN, also fails to distinguish studies of children's books from those that deal with fiction for young adults.

According to the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), the goal of all Young Adult stakeholders is to "engage, serve, and empower teens." Separation of Young Adult fiction from children's fiction in Spain was propelled by the market for English-language novels for teenage readers, inspiring Spanish publishers to promote this new category through prizes and booklists. The 1999 publication of the Spanish version of the first Harry Potter novel *Harry Potter y la piedra filosofal*—originally published by J. K. Rowling as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* two years earlier—was a likely catalyst. Even today, listings of top-selling Young Adult novels in Spain are dominated by translations of J. K. Rowling and other English-language writers, with Spanish authors gaining ground.[2] Sales figures explain the clout of Young Adult literature: the number of Young Adult books published annually in the United States totaled 30,000 when measured in 2009, and these books had a net revenue of 2.87 billion dollars in 2014. Sales are high because the category extends beyond the Young Adult demographic. Fully 55 percent of these books are purchased by adults over the age of 18, notably by readers who are 33–40 years old (Richards).

The lack of Young Adult fiction as a distinct category in the 1990s, which Ángel Esteban del Campo has identified as unique to the Hispanic world (859), allowed *Caperucita* to fall into the same grouping as picture books for pre-literate children. *Caperucita* was relegated to the children's aisle. Critics have consistently associated it with Martín Gaite's *El castillo de las tres murallas* (1981) and *El pastel del diablo* (1983): a typical characterization is that the book is one of her three "contributions to children's literature" (Rolón Collazo 139). This classification endures even though *El castillo* and *El pastel* are quite different from *Caperucita*. When the former two were published together as a single volume, they were labelled stories, not novels. The publisher Lumen combined the two works as *Dos relatos fantásticos*, and the book club Círculo de Lectores produced a collector's edition entitled *Dos cuentos maravillosos*. This is in contrast with the series

that *Caperucita* inaugurated for its publisher Siruela, as defined on the back cover of the first edition. Called "Las tres edades," the series is intended for all readers.

Caperucita en Manhattan is much more complex than the author's books for children. It illustrates ways in which "young adult novels are closer to novels for adults than they are to novels for children," lending credence to the argument that "the YA novel is a subset of the novel for adults while the novel for children is its own creature" (Cadden 307). Though *El castillo* and *El pastel* share features with *Caperucita*, their similarities do not diminish this distinction. While the two earlier books also have girls as protagonists and fantastical elements, they are less than half the length of *Caperucita*. The characters and plots of the first two books are much simpler, as befits their intended audience. The earlier books' professional "picture-book" illustrations are large and elaborate when compared with the small pen-and-ink drawings by the author that grace the last page of each chapter in *Caperucita*. The first two works take place in the worlds of castles and monsters that are the province of children's books. *Caperucita*, on the other hand, has adult content, though it steers clear of X-rated themes such as the bestiality of Angela Carter's "The Company of Wolves."[3] *Caperucita* contains specific information about a real place, New York City, and presents scholarly research about the Statue of Liberty—information that is new even to Americans. A linguistic analysis of a sample page (page 26) of all three texts indicates that *Caperucita* is more complex than either *El castillo* or *El pastel*. While the number of different words used is roughly identical among the three pages, the sample of *Caperucita* features more sophisticated vocabulary than the other two, with lexical items such as "fosforescentes," "minúsculos," and "segregaban."[4] Unfortunately, we do not have a quantitative measure to assess the quality of prose. Nevertheless, most will agree that *Caperucita* is beautifully written, reflecting both the author's talent and her everlasting preoccupation with her craft.

Misclassification is the only plausible explanation for the book's absence from comprehensive studies of Martín Gaite's later novels (Blanco; Cruz-Cámara; O'Leary and Ribeiro de Menezes). A partial exception is the scheme devised by José Jurado Morales, who groups *Caperucita* with the earlier children's books and adds a fourth novel, *La Reina de las Nieves* (1994), based on the rationale that all of these can be considered rewritten fairy tales. The sole volume in which *Caperucita en Manhattan* now appears as the first of her novels of the 1990s is Volume II of the *Obras completas*, although the fact that all of her novels are published in chronological order elides the issue of classification. Even the forward-looking anthology *Beyond the Back Room*, edited by Womack and Woods, scants *Caperucita en Manhattan*, with brief references embedded in essays about other works. Only when the novel is resituated in its proper context, as a Young Adult novel for all ages, is it likely to be restored to its proper place in the Martín Gaite canon. As Sandra Beckett observes, this novel invokes the original audience for the Red Riding Hood story: "Carmen Martín Gaite's *Caperucita en Manhattan* is an excellent example of the many contemporary retellings that address a cross audience of children and adults, thus restoring the story to the general audience it had in the oral tradition" (329). A translation into English, long overdue, would hasten recognition of its stature, as will a filmed version currently in development.

Spanish educators have confirmed the merits of *Caperucita* as a Young Adult novel, which is after all a category defined by its intended audience. The book has long been required reading for Spanish secondary-school students throughout the country. It also is taught to their older brothers and sisters in courses such as "Imaginario femenino en la literatura española" at the University of Granada. Young adult readers in Spain (and presumably elsewhere around the world) have responded enthusiastically to the novel. The Spanish student website *El rincón del vago* is replete with enthusiastic commentary, including observations about the differences between *Caperucita Roja* and *Caperucita en Manhattan* and awareness of the special significance of the character who is unique to the Martín Gaite version, Miss Lunatic (see "Caperucita en Manhattan"). Young readers also note how they found themselves swept up by the novel, finding

it a pleasure to read. Beyond its entertainment value, the novel is admired for its ability to move readers emotionally, inspiring them to relate its message to their own lives. According to a pioneering theorist of the genre, this is a key characteristic of Young Adult fiction: "Young adult literature exerts a powerful influence over its readers at a particularly malleable time in their identity formation" (Coats 315). One reader—who grew up to become Martín Gaite's publisher at Siruela—has poignantly recalled the impact that the novel, and its *hada* or magical being Miss Lunatic, had on her when she read it at seventeen:

> Y yo, en el mismo centro de mi laberinto, encontré de su mano la fuerza para caminar hacia la salida, en sus palabras la energía para enfrentarme a los lobos que aparecen en el camino de cualquier caperucita y en su ejemplo la capacidad para crecer como mujer y no sentir miedo ante el túnel negro que, como Sara Allen, todos tenemos delante en algún momento. Fueron unas horas que todavía conservo en mi memoria como si hubieran sido ayer. (Grande 265)

Caperucita's Autobiographical Significance

Caperucita en Manhattan is as crucial to understanding Martín Gaite's life as it is to her literary canon. This novel enabled Martín Gaite to return to long-form fiction after an absence of over a decade—a decade that promised to stretch on interminably. Following her resoundingly successful *El cuarto de atrás*, which won Spain's National Prize for Literature in 1978, she abandoned fiction-writing for the second time in her life, turning to historical nonfiction.[5] The only fiction that she published in the subsequent decade were her two short (under 100-page) novels for children: *El castillo de las tres murallas* and *El pastel del diablo*. Just when a return to novel-writing seemed natural, she suffered the worst personal blow of her life: her daughter Marta Sánchez Martín died in April of 1985. *Caperucita en Manhattan* rehabilitated Martín Gaite so that she could return to writing fiction—any kind of fiction—after this tragedy. In order to do so, she needed to recover her innate optimism about life.

Martín Gaite's biography is thoroughly intertwined with this work. José Teruel has described this connection ("Un contexto") and so has the author. The circumstances under which *Caperucita* was begun in New York City and New York State are detailed in her posthumously published essay "El otoño de Poughkeepsie," the poignant reminiscence of her semester as a visiting professor at Vassar College during the fall of 1985 (*Cuadernos* 611–30). To review the relevant facts: when her only child died at age 28, the author was left alone in the world except for her older sister and her friends. She had agreed to go to Vassar many months before, in what would be her fourth visiting professorship in the United States. She kept this promise even though she was at a low ebb emotionally.

Once she landed in New York, she stayed for a few days with her friend Juan Carlos Eguillor, who had done the drawings for *El castillo de las tres murallas* and who had an apartment in midtown Manhattan. He showed her an art project he had begun that was now stalled, about a character in New York City who resembled Little Red Riding Hood. At first Martín Gaite helped him with it, and they both enjoyed an initial flush of enthusiasm. Then, gradually, she took over the project, demonstrating her affinity for modern techniques of sampling and remix over sole proprietorship (Saum-Pascual) and also reflecting her longstanding fascination with fairy tales (Soliño). The resulting book is dedicated to her friend: "Para Juan Carlos Eguillor, por la respiración boca a boca que nos insulfó a Caperucita y a mí, perdidas en Manhattan a finales de aquel verano horrible."

Martín Gaite took the nascent project with her to Vassar. She was almost unimaginably lonely there, housed in a solitary apartment in what by day was a psychiatric health center (a situation whose comic potential she noted in "El otoño," marking the return of her sense of humor). Though at times the campus could seem like a refuge in the woods, Vassar was mostly an isolated and isolating enclosure for her, literally and figuratively walled off from the world. Fiction was, she thought, beyond the realm of the possible while she felt as devastated as she did.[6]

Although *Caperucita* was conceived in a convivial collaboration with a friend—"se nos ocurrían muchas cosas nuevas entre los dos, nos reíamos mucho" (*Cuadernos* 618)—the book's gestation would be protracted and solitary.[7] She constantly had to combat sadness and depression. In an early letter dated "Vassar, 26 sept. 85," she confessed: "Hay algunos días, te digo la verdad, en que la vida me pesa como una losa de plomo. Otros se me hace más llevadera. ¡Necesito tanta valentía . . . para seguir viviendo sin ella!"

Gradually she began working on *Caperucita* as her salvation, taking back enough in her suitcase to complete the novel in Madrid. Traces of floundering are embedded in the first part of the novel, with its nonrecurring characters and slow-building plot; as she noted later, "la novela se me empantanó" ("La libertad" 149). With the inspired addition of the fantastic character Miss Lunatic, the longer second part becomes a thrilling adventure. I do not view the author's resuscitation through *Caperucita* as primarily abstract and intellectual, rooted in her affinity for the genre of the fantastic (Teruel, "Un contexto"). Instead, I believe that she was saved partly by New York City, whose energy was contagious, and by her feisty protagonist, Sara Allen. By nurturing a young girl who would go on to a triumphant life—even though it was in a fictional world—the author was able to pick up the pieces of her own life and, most importantly for her own salvation, return to the pleasures that fiction-writing held for her.[8]

Manhattan's Magic

Although it might seem odd for a writer from Spain to be an expert on New York, in fact she researched the city just as she researched other topics. The seed of Martín Gaite's fascination was planted during her first visit in 1979 and bloomed while she was a visiting professor at Barnard College in the fall of 1980. The latter stay is documented in her posthumously published notebook of collages *Visión de Nueva York* (2005), which deploys images where words will not suffice. As noted earlier, a cluster of critics has seized on the author's multifaceted depictions of New York in *Caperucita*. Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, especially, captures the symbolic importance of the city, deeming it a "portico" or gateway "offering entry into a symbolic realm of self-understanding" (48).

Caperucita offers a tour of Manhattan landmarks as Miss Lunatic traverses them—dispensing wisdom and potions and even reading recommendations along the way.[9] This is the "geografía narrativa" of the city that Martín Gaite had proudly mastered ("La libertad" 139–40). She takes the idea of social construction of urban space to its imaginative extreme, adding a magic underground passageway between Battery Park and Liberty Island that might qualify as a mystical "Thirdspace" (Soja). Martín Gaite profiles the denizens of Manhattan with a sure eye, including affluent businesspeople in a hurry, tourists seeking photographs rather than experiences, self-satisfied ladies who lunch, gang members who target one another, young mothers with their hands full, salaried employees who relinquish their dreams, and police officers who swallow their fear to do their job. She captures the essence of Manhattan neighborhoods from rich to ragged, often to comic effect. One very amusing scene involves Miss Lunatic crashing a midtown movie shoot with Sara; although at first they are denied entry, the director ends up enchanted by Miss Lunatic and begging her to be in his film. Practical information abounds. Martín Gaite dispels the misconception that Manhattan is all there is, acknowledging that some people think it comprises all of New York City's boroughs because "impone su ley a los demás y los empequeñece y los deslumbra" (13). Helpful hints for travel within the city—including distances and public transportation routes—are part of the package.

Martín Gaite got a few things wrong, possibly on purpose.[10] There is no "Morningside" neighborhood in Manhattan, only the more prosaic "Morningside Heights." In American English, the character's name would be Mr. "Wolf" and not "Woolf," as with the British author whose novels Martín Gaite translated. And the trumpeted analogy used to explain the shape of Manhattan, devised by Sara and enthusiastically repeated by adults around her, is unlikely

to be understood by Americans. The observation that Manhattan "se trata de una isla en forma de jamón" (13) is meaningless even to a New Yorker, because most Americans have never seen a ham outside of a can—or shrink wrapped in plastic. Ultimately, the New York of this novel is her very own. As Miguel Delibes sagely observed in the preface to his travel memoir *USA y yo*: "un país no es sólo lo que ese país sea sino lo que le añade la perspectiva de cada observador y aun la disposición síquica y mental de éste" (311).

The New York City of *Caperucita* is mostly remembered from her earlier stay at Barnard. Even though some details seem unimaginable now, the setting of this novel is largely realistic because it is the New York of the late 1970s and early 1980s—bankrupt, filthy, and economically diverse. Martín Gaite was especially concerned with homeless people, whom she observed walking the streets and talking to themselves (in the days before cell phones), often pushing a shopping cart containing their worldly possessions; in a later novel, a character would refer sympathetically to "la enfermedad de los *homeless*" (*Irse de casa* 251), a problem that persists today.

Martín Gaite also had new experiences in the city while she was at Vassar, and these feature prominently in the novel. One memorable visit was on her sixtieth birthday, the 8th of December of 1985. We had lunch at the restaurant Windows on the World atop the World Trade Center, which afforded a stunning view—partially blocked by clouds—of the topography below. Later that afternoon the author discovered what would become the model for Mr. Woolf's "tart-shaped" apartment building: Hampshire House on Central Park West. My godfather, a movie producer, owned the penthouse in that building, which she loved. (Hampshire House had also been immortalized by Frida Kahlo, though neither of us knew this at the time.[11]) He welcomed us with champagne, which would be the preferred drink of the worldly Manhattanites in *Caperucita* (Mr. Woolf, Gloria Star, and Miss Lunatic). When Martín Gaite mentioned that she admired Woody Allen (whose 1979 film *Manhattan* was billed as "a love letter to New York"), my godfather offered to introduce them. In her last Vassar letter, dated December 14, 1985, she described her birthday as "mágico."

Sara's Salvation

The best magic of all—the magic that revived her—came from writing the story of a girl who triumphed with the help of a maternal figure. Martín Gaite herself has been identified with Miss Lunatic by critics, and this is accurate ("Miss Lunatic, soy yo" she used to exclaim). The character's description of what makes life worth living is very close to the author's personal manifesto in her "Bosquejo autobiográfico." Miss Lunatic explains that for her, living involves taking her time, listening, telling the truth, having patience, and sharing a glass of wine or breaking bread over conversation. Living also means accepting solitude: "Vivir es saber estar solo para aprender a estar en compañía" (92). Talking to herself just before she meets young Sara, Miss Lunatic could be speaking for her creator, warning her not to fall back into depression:

> No quería darle coba a aquella desgana de vivir, se resistía a dejarse resbalar por la pendiente de las ideas negras. "Si caes al pozo, estás perdida—le dijo aquella voz interior—. Porque una vez allí, ya no ves nada, lo sabes de siempre." Sí, lo sabía. Y también que no ver nada, era dejar de vivir. (119)

Upon meeting Sara, this depression lifts—both for the character and for her author. Miss Lunatic "sintió como si su viejo corazón se calentara ante las llamas de una inesperada hoguera" (121). In a felicitous twist, Little Red Riding Hood comes to lead her progenitor out of the woods.

As with New York City, Martín Gaite's fascination with young people had autobiographical roots. The author enjoyed spending time with children—delighting in what sociologists call "sanctioned regression"—and children adored her. My evidence of this joy comes from seeing her with my two children, reading to them and playing games, always getting down on the floor

with them to be at their level. Asunción (Ton) Carandell has shared memories of these same activities with her children in the 1950s, specifically the summer of 1957, at the summer home she shared with her husband Agustín Goytisolo in Reus, Catalonia:

> Carmiña desayunaba con algún otro madrugador y siempre con mi hermana Tere, entonces de diecinueve años, y conmigo. Era muy alegre y cuando acababa el desayuno los niños la rodeaban para que jugara con ellos. Mi hermana Ita, de ocho años . . . ; Juan, de seis y Cristián, de cinco, la seguían para que les cantara alguna canción y les gastara bromas con algún juego de palabras. Las dos pequeñas, Marta y Julia, mi hija, también colaboraron en el jolgorio, riendo y llamándola para que les hiciera cosquillas. (Riera and Carandell 43)

By the time she wrote *Caperucita,* Martín Gaite had already created two intrepid young female protagonists: Altalé in *El castillo de las tres murallas* and Sorpresa in *El pastel del diablo*. Two other girls were intertexts for *Caperucita*: her daughter and mine. After Marta died, we talked a lot about what it meant to raise a young woman in the harsh modern world. There were wolves lurking everywhere, ready to pounce. When my daughter was born in 1987, she changed the name of the main character to hers, calling it a "godmother's gift."

The relationship of fairy godmother to protégé was a natural one for her, and it is immortalized in *Caperucita*, from the time that Miss Lunatic exclaims: "¡Cómo me gustaría descargar mis fardos más secretos en alguien más joven, digno de heredarlos!" (119). More than just leaving a mark on another person, the author wanted to help young people grow, just as she had done with her daughter until she left this world. This desire subtends all of the author's fiction for young readers and reaches its fullest expression in her novel for young adults. As Ribeiro de Menezes has observed, Martín Gaite respected childhood as much as adulthood, so that her literature for young people "sets out to convey in more direct form many of the preoccupations of her adult fiction, particularly as regards the possibilities for girls of self-realization and the acquisition of intellectual autonomy" (51). In her last reference to me about young people, following her final visit with my children and dated July 14, 1997, she wrote:

> Les deseo a esos niños lo mejor en la vida, como un hada anacrónica. Porque en mis deseos va incluido el de que no renuncien a sus sueños, fantasías e idealismo. Ni al riesgo.

These wishes were the same ones that she had for her own daughter, who had a life of freedom and adventures before she died. And they are the wishes that Miss Lunatic confers on the little American girl who pulled her out of the abyss, Sara Allen, when she says goodbye. "¿Qué voy a hacer sin ti? Me quedo como metida en un laberinto," Sara says to Miss Lunatic. "Procura encontrar tu camino en el laberinto," Miss Lunatic replies. "Quien no ama la vida, no lo encuentra. Pero tú la amas mucho," (158) she affirms, adding that she will always be with Sara in spirit. *Caperucita en Manhattan* became its author's path out of the labyrinth: her transition back to loving life, and writing, in her newly empty Madrid home. She had once again recovered the thread of a story, as she described in a 1978 letter about *El cuarto de atrás*: "Y sobre todo me anima y me divierte cuando, como ahora, consigo recoger el hilo que parecía haberse roto. Es como si reviviera" ("Carta").

Having lost herself in the triumphant adventure of Red Riding Hood and having found within herself the courage she needed to resume life in Madrid, Martín Gaite would go on to her most fertile literary decade for the novel. Assessing her output, Jurado Morales observed that she published more novels in the 1990s (six) than in the entire period spanning the 1950s to the 1980s (five), a statistic that becomes more dramatic in his invaluable five-column chart, with blank columns for the years 1963–74 as well as for 1978–90 (13). Without Sara Allen and Miss Lunatic's Manhattan, that chart would surely have been different, most likely with a final blank space for what instead were her most prolific years. Rather than the mouth-to-mouth

resuscitation mentioned in the book's dedication, the resuscitation that Martín Gaite got from *Caperucita en Manhattan* was of another kind: a literary revival that breathed new life into her illustrious career.

NOTES

[1] Recent attempts to define the author's legacy include the conferences "Carmen Martín Gaite Ten Years On: Revisiting Her Textual and Visual Legacy," University of London (2010); "Un lugar llamado Carmen Martín Gaite," Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (2013); and the MLA Special Session "Carmen Martín Gaite in the Twenty-first Century: What Defines Her Legacy?" (2015). Publications dedicated to this topic include the special double issue of *Ínsula* "El legado de Carmen Martín Gaite" edited by Teruel (2011), the collection *Beyond the Back Room: New Perspectives on Carmen Martín Gaite* edited by Womack and Woods (2011), the MLA volume *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Carmen Martín Gaite* edited by Brown (2013), the special issue of *Espéculo* "CMG: Nuevas Perspectivas" coordinated by Carbayo-Abengózar (2014), and published versions of both the Madrid conference (a book with the same title edited by Teruel and Valcárcel [2014]) and the MLA conference as a special feature in *Hispania* edited by Brown (2015).

[2] Of the dozen young-adult bestsellers in Spain for the first week of May, 2016, only one was by a Spanish author, who interestingly uses the English pseudonym Blue Jeans (see *El cultural*). Other successful contemporary Spanish Young Adult writers include Maite Carranza, Laura Gallego, David Lozano Garbala, Fernando Marías, Chris Pueyo, Esther Sanz and Carlos Ruiz Zafón, along with so-called *Youtubers* who parlay their Internet presence into books, such as the one who uses the name Dallas Review (*El cultural*).

[3] A comparative study of Martín Gaite's rendering of the Red Riding Hood story with that of Angela Carter in *The Bloody Chamber* is offered by Morales Ladrón, who finds that only Martín Gaite's version challenges patriarchal values.

[4] Of the three works, *Caperucita en Manhattan* is the only one that has given rise to a published linguistic analysis: a study of the modalities that serve to express subjectivity and involve the reader as an active participant (Arce).

[5] The first time that Martín Gaite left off writing fiction for a decade was in 1962, after the publication of her novel *Ritmo lento*. In that case the novel's reception was a disappointment. *Ritmo lento* was first runner-up for the prestigious Biblioteca Breve prize in the first year that the prize was awarded to a Latin American writer, Mario Vargas Llosa (for *La ciudad y los perros*). Martín Gaite turned her attention to scholarly research, beginning with her long-deferred doctoral dissertation, earning a PhD in philology from the University of Madrid in 1972. Her next novel, *Retahílas*, was published in 1974.

[6] Interviewer Cantavella recalled her telling him that she could not write while her wound remained open: "'Espero que esto pasará pronto y volveré a escribir novelas. Entonces podré hurgar dentro de mí misma, sin que me duelan tanto los recuerdos,' nos decía hace años" (43).

[7] As she recorded on the last page of the novel, the book was begun on August 28, 1985, in New York City, and finished on February 28, 1990, in Madrid.

[8] Martín Gaite explained in a speech on June 20, 1978, at the Barcelona publication party for *El cuarto de atrás*: "Siempre he pensado que el que no se divierte escribiendo difícilmente conseguirá divertir a los demás."

[9] For instance, she recommends Italo Calvino's 1959 novella *El caballero inexistente*—about a suit of armor with no knight inside—to a police commissioner, as a remedy for fear.

[10] Spelling errors in English have been corrected in the version that appears in the *Obras completas*; for example, "Lexinghton Avenue" has been changed to "Lexington." The errors discussed here remain.

[11] Kahlo's painting "El suicidio de Dorothy Hale" immortalized the 1938 demise of the society woman who jumped to her death from a high floor.

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